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First Committee
17th meeting
Wednesday, 18 October 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 65 to 81 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Alfred (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to express its views on thematic discussion items 5 and 6, "Regional disarmament" and "Confidence-building measures".

I begin by apologizing that I limit myself to a statement about actions taken by Central Africa, the region to which Gabon belongs. In Yaoundé in July 1996, the heads of State and Government of the countries of the subregion signed a non-aggression pact that had been approved three years earlier, during a meeting in Libreville. By the terms of that legal instrument, the States of the subregion committed themselves not only to solving all conflicts by peaceful means, but to not allowing the use of their respective territories as bases from which to destabilize other States.

The countries of Central Africa periodically organize joint meetings between the ministers of defence, the interior and foreign affairs, as well as the military joint chiefs of staff and chiefs of police. For over 10 years now, we have been strengthening transparency in military activities. To that end, all the States of the subregion that intend to undertake military manoeuvres are required to notify other States, which are also invited to observe those manoeuvres.

With regard to armaments, the States of the subregion have renounced the acquisition, transport and production of weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. The States of the subregion have also expressed their commitment to strengthening the fight against the transfer and illicit acquisition of weapons and drugs. With the participation of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and the collaboration of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, they have organized a regional conference on the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms in Central Africa.

We should also like to thank the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, and in particular the secretariat of the Standing Advisory Committee, for their constant efforts and support in promoting confidence-building measures in Central Africa.

My delegation nevertheless regrets that because of the war which unfortunately has developed in one of the countries of the subregion, we have not been able to undertake a subregional plan to fight the scourge of destabilizing traffic in small arms.

Pursuing our policy of transparency in the area of security, the countries of Central Africa have decided, amongst other things, to develop measures to foster

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agreement on the gradual reduction of forces, equipment and military budgets in the States of the subregion. On 25 February 1999, a higher Council for Peace and Security, called COPAX, was set up in Central Africa. This is a body for political and military dialogue for the member States of the Economic Community of Central African States, for the purpose of consolidating peace and security. The Council includes the Central African Multinational Force called FOMAC, and a rapid warning mechanism for the subregion, with its headquarters in Gabon.

A number of measures have been taken within the subregion to strengthen confidence-building measures with a view to better promoting the peace and security so essential to development. Recently, a subregional conference on refugees was organized in Bujumbura. This provided the Central African countries the opportunity to review problems inherent in the management of refugees and to establish confidence-building measures between refugee host countries and countries of origin. My delegation welcomes similar measures taken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and would like to recall these to the international community and various agencies of the United Nations, so that financial, technical and material support can be provided for various subregional initiatives to establish and strengthen confidence-building measures.

I should like to conclude by recalling an excellent presentation made yesterday by the Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. He told us of activities being carried out by the Centre, including the collection of and search for small-arms caches with a view to destroying these weapons. The African Centre has explained its activities with regard to the reintegration of child soldiers. We believe that the international community and the countries of Africa first and foremost should help each other and provide financial, moral, material, intellectual and political resources to the Centre, whose work we consider beneficial.

Mr. Sanders (The Netherlands): As this is my first intervention, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, and the Bureau on your election as officers of the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We have full confidence in your able guidance to take us through this year's session.

It is my honour to present to this Committee, also on behalf of its 97 initial sponsors, the well-known annual draft resolution on transparency in armaments, with reference A/C.1/55/L.43. Transparency in armaments is one of the major principles of confidence-building among States, which enables the international community to be better informed about military matters and developments. Transparency in armaments thus diminishes misperceptions and helps to avoid distorted information.

It is important to note that the concept of transparency in armaments is certainly not restricted to conventional armaments only. The desirability of transparency applies as much to weapons of mass destruction as it does to conventional weapons. The Netherlands has always been, and continues to be, an advocate of greater transparency regarding nuclear weapons. The active role played by the Netherlands in this regard during the last Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference is testimony to that effort.

The Netherlands has always had great sympathy for the aim of greater transparency in the field of weapons of mass destruction. However, we do not think that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is the appropriate vehicle for reaching that goal. Therefore, the Netherlands is pleased to note that this year only one draft resolution on the subject of transparency in armaments has been presented to the First Committee instead of two, as has been the case in the past. In this regard, I should like to express our sincere appreciation to Egypt for not submitting its own draft resolution this year. It is our sincere hope that a single resolution on transparency in armaments will contribute to the promotion of universal participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Mechanisms for transparency in nuclear and chemical weapons already exist. Negotiations for a mechanism for biological weapons are going on in Geneva within the ad hoc group on a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention. There are multilateral treaties related to weapons of mass destruction, and there will be more of them in the future. For conventional weapons, however, only limited instruments are thus far available for increasing the degree of transparency. There are arrangements for certain very specific types of conventional weapons, and for certain regions.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the Ottawa Convention deal with specific types of weapons, while the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which was fundamentally revised at the summit meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Istanbul, deals with a specific region. The Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions is also an important regional arrangement that deals with specific types of conventional weapons. Earlier this year, we also saw the establishment of a register and database on small arms and light weapons within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), just referred to by the previous speaker.

These important regional initiatives and arrangements on conventional armaments underpin the great contribution that regional organizations can make to the issue of transparency in armaments. Unfortunately, however, nothing comparable exists at the global level, with the exception of a modest form of international reporting on military expenditures and reporting on arms transfers and holdings on a voluntary basis.

The establishment in 1992 of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as part of a broader range of international efforts to promote openness and transparency in military matters was a step in that direction. The Register could help to prevent an excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms. It contributes to enhancing confidence, easing tensions and strengthening regional and international peace and security and to restraint in military production and the transfer of arms.

Given the scarcity and the limited nature of global arrangements on major conventional weapons systems, we should do our utmost not only to protect but, more importantly, to improve and further develop the Register, in terms of both participation and scope of reporting.

The Group of Governmental Experts that convened earlier this year has prepared a report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development. Last week, Mr. Raphael Grossi of Argentina, on behalf of the Group, gave an eloquent presentation on their findings. One of those findings was that the Register must be reviewed periodically. We therefore support in our draft resolution the convening of a group of experts in the year 2003.

The total number of Member States that have reported to the Register at least once is still growing and now stands at 146. Of these 146 States, approximately 80 are regular participants in the Register, including nearly all the main exporters and most of the main importers of the major conventional arms covered by the Register. Overall participation in the Register continues to increase gradually. Over the years, the level of participation has remained one of the highest compared with similar international reporting instruments.

The Register thus has become reasonably well established. It has established a de facto norm of transparency in armaments which Governments must take into account. It provides a significant amount of information officially reported by Governments that otherwise would not have been available, information that provides a legitimate basis for regional and inter-regional consultations between Governments. The Register also performs an important role in public information, promoting the accountability of political and military leaderships. The Register has also stimulated many Governments to improve their national systems for monitoring and controlling arms transfers. Finally, the Register has set an example for regional initiatives, such as the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions mentioned earlier.

It has also been noted, however, that after spectacular growth in participation and reporting in its initial use, the number of countries reporting to the Register on a regular basis has stabilized in recent years. This slow-down in growth is partly due to a number of drop-outs — countries that reported to the Register in the past but no longer do so, or which have been inconsistent in their reporting. Furthermore, countries that had no transfer did not report to the Register.

In this context, I should like to repeat the appeal made on the first day of our session by France, on behalf of the European Union. Those countries that have no transfers to report in a given year are expected to turn in a so-called nil report. A nil report provides important information for other participants in the Register, since it is a confirmation that no transfers have taken place. If countries do not fill in a nil report,

others will never know for sure whether or not transfers have taken place.

There is a continuing need for the United Nations Secretariat and actively interested States to encourage wider and more consistent participation. In this context, I should like to express my sincere appreciation for the efforts made by the Secretariat in compiling and publishing the Register, assisting Member States with the submission of their reporting and preparing expert meetings. I should also like to express my sincere appreciation to the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs for having last week organized an information meeting on reporting to the Register. These meetings hope to create greater awareness of the functioning of the Register.

As in previous years, one of the main purposes of this draft resolution is to support the concept of transparency in armaments and to encourage Member States to participate in the Register. I sincerely hope that this Committee will continue to give its widespread support to the draft resolution on transparency in armaments in general and to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms in particular.

Mr. Jakubowski (Poland): As this is the first time I am addressing this Committee, allow me first to congratulate the Chairman on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. He and the members of the Bureau can count on my delegation's support in their efforts toward a productive session.

Speaking in the thematic debate, I should like briefly to discuss the subject of conventional disarmament, regional security and the Conference on Disarmament. A veteran Polish diplomat, later a distinguished member of the International Court of Justice, the late Manfred Lachs, once noted:

> "At San Francisco we believed we were setting two objectives on the road to peace: decolonization and disarmament. We thought that decolonization would take at least 50 years, while disarmament we could achieve in a decade. In fact, it turned out to be exactly the other way around."

Frankly speaking, Judge Lachs was overly optimistic. More than half a century after the inception of the United Nations, there is still a heavy agenda of pending disarmament problems. It is illustrative of how far we have fallen behind the target date anticipated in San Francisco. As the debate in this Committee has clearly shown, this is the case with regard to many areas, with conventional weapons certainly among them.

For decades, the primary concern of the international community was how to avoid a nuclear conflict and ensure the use of nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes. We have seen momentous developments in the nuclear area. With important bilateral and multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements in place, the world has become a more secure place in which to live. However, the threat of a nuclear conflagration has receded only — and sadly — to be replaced by other challenges to stability and security. Often assuming the form of intra-State, ethnic or religious conflicts fought with conventional arms, these challenges are characterized by untold violence and unusual cruelty. As is often the case, the principal victims are non-combatant civilians: the young, the old and the infirm.

The classical notion of stability based upon equilibrium between two adversary groupings has undergone a fundamental change. International security has become multidimensional with the changing role of the military factor. This does not mean that arms control and disarmament have become irrelevant or have no valid role to play in preventing conflicts, reducing the risk of war, strengthening confidence and enhancing international security.

Clearly, the long agenda in the nuclear area is heavy with unfinished business, but this is not sufficient reason to neglect the question of conventional arms. It is these arms, used in innumerable regional conflicts over the last few decades, which account for infinitely more victims than have been claimed by theoretically more potent but less usable nuclear arms. As we read in the "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament" of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the level of accumulation of small arms alone continues to affect international security negatively and to have devastating consequences for socio-economic development and the humanitarian situation in the countries and regions concerned.

The international community can neither comprehend nor reconcile the failure to place conventional disarmament measures on the disarmament agenda and to address these in earnest. As

the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament could play a critical role in negotiating global measures on specific conventional weapons and weapons systems. We need to work out a comprehensive approach in this regard — an approach that would, it is hoped, go beyond the scope of issues such as the illicit traffic in small arms or the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, however important these are.

International security is a concept that is becoming more comprehensive and multidimensional in character. The notion of security is increasingly associated with how successful we are in upholding common values — combating organized crime and terrorism, preventing abuses of human rights, famine, etc. However, I believe there is still a consensual view that progress in conventional disarmament is inextricably linked to the strengthening of international security, including in a regional context. Indeed, more often than not, security starts in the region and at home. Thus, one should first look to one's own backyard.

Despite the recent tragic history of the conflicts on the perimeter of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Europe can be considered a good example of how much might be achieved in the domain of regional security through conventional disarmament. The adoption of the Charter for European Security and the successful completion of negotiations on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe have made our continent safer. Poland has actively participated in this process and will participate in the implementation of what has been achieved.

In the course of the general debate in this Committee the Ambassador of France, in his statement on behalf of the European Union, pointed out the responsibility of Europeans for developments on the continent. The need to elaborate a common European security and defence policy (CESDP) and the resolve of the European Union to create rapid deployment forces have specifically been referred to. Poland has fully associated itself with that statement. At the same time, we should like to express our conviction that the role of those European countries which have adequate capabilities and which wish to actively participate in this process under the full decision-making autonomy of the European Union should not be bypassed.

This is important for us, the more so in that the majority of European States have clearly expressed their willingness to cooperate closely with the European Union in this sphere. It should also be remembered that for some time now the Union has been involved in a political dialogue with its partners on the question of CESDP. Intensive preparations are already underway in the capitals of the aforementioned States for presenting national contributions to the rapid deployment forces of the European Union — the so-called European Headline Goal.

When it comes to the Conference on Disarmament, value judgements cannot be an acceptable yardstick in regard to either the substance of its business or its procedure and modus operandi. Yet, paradoxically, the evaluation of the work of the Conference — the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body — is one area where consensus among its members is more likely than in any other.

A sense of dissatisfaction or even frustration over the windows of opportunity lost as the result of the enduring controversy over a work programme is shared by all. We tend to decry the prolonged paralysis of this body, to deplore its tarnished prestige and to advocate the re-examination of its operating mode, procedures or agenda. Some consider that the Conference — a body dating back to cold war days and a bipolar world — needs to be more representative of the international community and more responsive to the challenges and realities at the threshold between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

It is claimed now and again that the Conference on Disarmament is in decline — some say death throes — that it has outlived its usefulness, that it is at the cross-roads and that something must therefore be done about it — either revitalize it or dissolve it. We do not take such a dim view of the Conference and its future. The crisis through which that body has been passing for some time now is not of its own making. Indeed, it is the reflection of broader geo-strategic relationships between States. It is the international climate at large and security concerns of States, not Conference procedures, that determine the conduct of negotiations.

As a negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament stands apart. Unlike global economic or environmental problems dealt with in various forums, arms control and disarmament is a domain that affects

the most vital security interests of States. More often than not, these interests cannot be satisfactorily dealt with in random, open-ended frameworks. We accept that the problem is to negotiate meaningful and verifiable arms control agreements that involve "players" who count.

There is basically nothing wrong with the Conference. Its ability to get down to serious work at short notice is there, unimpaired. What is scarce is political will to take advantage of the available potential. The recent efforts to reach consensus on a work programme have demonstrated the critical importance of political will. Flexibility and imagination by the majority of the Conference members resulted in a near-consensus on the programme of work. While not totally happy with all aspects of the proposal discussed, they could live with it. To them, the proposal was a good basis on which the Conference could operate. Regrettably, full consensus proved elusive once again. The irritating deadlock could have been broken and purpose-oriented endeavours of the Conference could by now be under way.

Basically, I repeat, there is nothing wrong with the Conference on Disarmament, although, for instance, rule 27 of the rules of procedure could be amended in one important respect. In Poland's considered view, at its the annual sessions the Conference should not vigorously enforce cut-off dates for the work of subsidiary bodies. Once a subsidiary body is established and entrusted with a specific mandate, it ought to be able to continue until its mandated task is achieved. There should be no need for its existence or its mandate to be renewed every year. One concrete benefit would be the avoidance of the divisive and unbecoming wrangle over the work programme we are so familiar with and irritated by.

The Conference on Disarmament could and should be in better shape. We agree. However, we are not prepared to question its enduring relevance because "it is not delivering". Like some other Conference members, we think that substantial redeeming value is inherent even in ostensibly idle deliberations. In the domain of disarmament, which is so crucial for the national interests of States and for international security, knowing more about others — and through that to know more about ourselves — is an indispensable condition for confidence-building. The latter, in turn, is indispensable if we are to properly evaluate from the national perspective the price of compromise, which is a *conditio sine qua non* of each and every disarmament step. Indeed, it seems to us that the Conference, in addition to its other functions, is a very specific confidence-building forum, the true importance of which could be demonstrated only by the Conference's non-existence. Then we would have to invent it.

It is not true that the Conference has been lying entirely idle. We all know that. My delegation would like to believe that all those frequently invisible steps build a critical mass of political will, responsibility towards the future and a sense of urgency which will yield a long-awaited harvest. We hope the deliberations in this Committee will bring us all closer to that important goal.

Mr. Keita (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of presenting to the First Committee, on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), our annual draft resolution on "Assistance to States for curbing illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them", in document A/C.1/55/L.11.

The preamble sets out the profound causes of the initiatives taken at subregional level and at the level of the United Nations with a view to better identifying the problems related to small arms. The breadth and persistence of the phenomena of insecurity and major banditry related to illicit traffic in small arms, their illegal international transfer and their accumulation in numerous countries constitute a threat to the populations of these States and to their national and regional security and are a factor contributing to the destabilization of States.

It has thus become necessary to advance our efforts towards greater cooperation in order to eliminate this scourge. The operative section of the text notes that actions have been undertaken by the West African subregion, ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations in implementing this initiative. Among these actions, we could mention the flame of peace ceremony held in Niger and in Liberia, during which thousands of weapons turned in by ex-combatants were destroyed. A project to collect arms in order to finance development projects has been initiated in Guinea-Bissau.

The operative section of the draft resolution encourages the setting up of national commissions against the proliferation of small arms and recommends

the involvement of organizations and associations of civil society in efforts to combat the proliferation of these weapons. Finally, the text expresses full support for the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in the year 2001.

My delegation would like to thank all those countries that kindly agreed to co-sponsor this draft resolution. Its substance remains an essential preoccupation for the development of our States. We welcome cooperation with the Secretary-General and the Department for Disarmament Affairs and urge them to pursue their efforts in order to make more dynamic, and provide support for, the different initiatives of the West African subregion.

As in previous years, we should like this draft resolution to continue to enjoy the consensus support of the First Committee.

Mr. Abou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): Addressing this Committee for the first time, Sir, my delegation wishes to congratulate you most sincerely on your election. We are very pleased to see the manner in which you are fulfilling this task. My delegation also wishes to congratulate Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General, for his introductory statement.

As a co-author of draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.11, the delegation of Niger wishes to support the presentation made by Mali and to say specifically that we share the high expectations for this initiative. The importance of this draft resolution lies in the need for greater involvement by the international community in efforts carried out by Governments against the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons.

My delegation feels that it is essential that States manifesting a real will to build peace and to ensure the security of their populations in order resolutely to tackle development problems see serious support for their efforts, so as to speed up the process already underway. As mentioned by Mr. Dhanapala in his introductory statement, my country illustrates a commitment on the part of its people to consolidate peace through concrete disarmament measures, through the flame of peace ceremony held in Agadez on 25 September 2000, during which over a thousand weapons were handed over by former rebels and burned — one element of the implementation of peace agreements. Another meaningful aspect of this ceremony was the decision taken by the former rebels to announce their own dissolution and their commitment to civil life in various sectors of the economy.

In this respect, my delegation feels that the consolidation of peace involves at least three urgent actions if it is to be real and lasting. The first is raising public awareness, especially in those areas most affected by recent conflicts. The second is recovery of weapons held by civilians who have had to defend themselves. It is important that those who agree to hand over weapons may be confident that a simultaneous or gradual recovery of weapons is taking place involving those who are still hesitant and who might be considered potential aggressors. The third action is the implementation of development measures to fight poverty and to rehabilitate the affected areas in a comprehensive manner, because scarcity of economic resources and infrastructure gives rise to conflict.

In order to carry out these measures, my Government has defined a framework for intervention, in particular through the programme for the development of pastoral zones prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for the Restoration of Peace in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which should soon be the subject of a round table by donors.

In addition, the national commission for collecting illicit weapons is carrying out its activities with determination. It has drawn up a pilot project to recover arms from Nguigmi, which has drawn the attention of the group of countries interested in practical disarmament measures, particularly France, Germany, Japan and Norway, whose financial contribution made possible the fact-finding mission carried out by the Department for Disarmament Affairs last August. This mission, which gathered a great deal of information during its visit to Niger and appreciated the commitment of the authorities and various stakeholders in the peace process, drew relevant conclusions in its final report.

My delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the above-mentioned countries as well as to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for the substantial interest in this programme. It invites other countries to join this arms recovery initiative of Niger by firmly supporting the national commission, so that its success will allow other local ceremonies for the destruction of weapons to take place, as planned by the

Government. This approach is the best option and the ultimate goal in guaranteeing peace and stability, since, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his annual report for 1999, "Destroying yesterday's weapons prevents their being used in tomorrow's wars."

Mr. Palanimanickam (India): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament", in document A/C.1/55/L.31, on agenda item 69, sponsored by Bangladesh, Bhutan, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Guyana, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This draft resolution addresses an issue of importance to the international community and the developing world. The growth of science and technology offers immense possibilities for development, but at the same time there is a need to recognize that several of these advances could have military applications and are euphemistically described as "dual use" in character.

This year's draft resolution is similar to resolution 54/50 of last year, except for the deletion of paragraph 4, which is no longer relevant.

Access to scientific and technological advances for development purposes remains a priority issue for developing countries. In fact, such access is an impetus for economic growth and can have a positive impact on global trade. At the same time, several countries in the developing world have had to pay a price in terms of development because of the persistence of discriminatory control regimes. These regimes are in effect no more than exclusive groupings of countries that limit exchanges of such technologies to themselves while denying access to others who may require them for peaceful development purposes. These regimes are the equivalent of non-economic barriers to normal trade and go against the generally accepted principles of global economic relations.

Policies devoted exclusively to export controls were initiated to address proliferation concerns at a time when there were no global agreements that comprehensively addressed this issue. Questions have arisen whether such exclusive arrangements with limited membership have been effective in achieving their stated purpose of strengthening the international non-proliferation regime, especially as regards the scientific and technological applications connected with advanced weapons as well as weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) — the first multilateral disarmament agreement of a universal character eliminating a complete class of weapons of mass destruction — offered an opportunity to put in place a multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory legal mechanism that would simultaneously address proliferation concerns emanating from unregulated transfers while at the same time promoting the economic development of States parties. The CWC placed an obligation on States parties to review their export policies as measures they take to prevent the spread of chemical materials and equipment for purposes contrary to the objectives of the Convention. However, the persistence of certain ad hoc control regimes, creating a dual category of States parties to the CWC, draws attention to the need for early implementation of all provisions of the Convention, to safeguard its long-term viability and effectiveness.

The ongoing negotiations for an effective protocol to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972 provide the States parties with an opportunity to establish an effective system to regulate transfers of the agents, toxins, equipment and technologies relevant to the Convention while avoiding measures that hamper the economic development of States parties. The negotiations should also benefit from the lessons learned from the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention since its entry into force.

The lack of a genuinely non-discriminatory, universal agreement regarding nuclear weapons has also reduced the effectiveness of non-proliferation efforts in the nuclear field. Nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects cannot be divorced from the need for measures that promote nuclear disarmament and the progressive elimination of nuclear weapons. The absence of a disarmament benchmark renders nuclear non-proliferation difficult not only to implement but also to measure.

India has consistently maintained that proliferation concerns regarding materials and technologies related to advanced weapon systems and weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery are best addressed through multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory agreements that are transparent and open to universal participation. The reflection of this principle in multilateral disarmament agreements would not only improve their effectiveness but also create an added impetus for their universality.

With a view to carrying forward the consideration by the international community of the issues at hand, India, along with the other sponsors, commends the draft resolution for adoption by this Committee. We hope it will receive the support of a large number of delegations.

Mrs. Pereira (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my honour to speak on behalf of the countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and on behalf of the associated States Bolivia and Chile on agenda item 73 (g), "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction".

We are very pleased to note the progress achieved in the implementation of this essential instrument for disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Convention has already been ratified or acceded to by approximately 140 States. Nevertheless, despite the rapid progress in increasing its membership, a great efforts is still needed to achieve the objective of giving the Convention and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) a universal character and extent.

We note with satisfaction that since August 1998, all the countries of MERCOSUR and the two associated States have signed and ratified the Convention. Ratification of the Convention by these six countries is not an isolated demonstration of our contribution to the multilateral mechanisms for disarmament. Even prior to the conclusion of the negotiations of OPCW in Geneva, Argentina, Brazil and Chile united to sign the Mendoza Declaration in 1991, a formal commitment completely to prohibit chemical and biological weapons. The subsequent accession of Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Ecuador to that international instrument confirmed the pioneering tradition of Latin America in the implementation of measures of a global nature.

In 1998, through the Declaration of Ushuaia, which I will refer to under another item of our agenda, MERCOSUR and the associated States created in the region a zone of peace free of weapons of mass destruction. More recently, in the Brasilia Communiqué, the 12 Presidents of the South American countries agreed to establish a zone of peace in South America.

The incorporation of the letter and spirit of OPCW into our legislation is consequently one additional piece which has been reiterated and strengthened by various initiatives complementary to the broader set of measures which consolidate the deep-rooted commitment of the countries of the Southern Cone to the elimination of chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

With regard to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the group would like to praise the dynamic and effective leadership of the Director-General of the OPCW, Ambassador José Mauricio Bustani. We should like to express our satisfaction at the renewal of his mandate at the head of OPCW, which we believe constitutes international acknowledgement of his devotion and professionalism and of the credentials of the region in the field of chemical weapons.

This was underscored during the successful visit of the Director-General to the countries of the region last April. Similarly, the Chilean presidency of the fifth Conference of States Parties last May and the election of Uruguay to the Executive Council of the Organization show the vitality of the participation of the countries of the region in OPCW.

We support the inclusion on the agenda of the General Assembly of the item on cooperation between the United Nations and the OPCW. The countries of MERCOSUR and the associated States do our utmost to meet our obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Our Governments and industries have fully cooperated with the inspection activities carried out thus far by the OPCW in our countries.

These inspections took place in a climate of understanding, and we should like to stress the professional attitude of the inspectors. The region made an important contribution to improving the verification

mechanisms of the OPCW by carrying out the first challenge inspection exercise in a private industrial plant in Brazil.

We feel that in addition to cooperation in the areas of science and technology, the mechanism of the Convention should be used to promote the legitimacy of international controls on sensitive chemical substances. Not to do so would contribute to the weakening of this model instrument for disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Convention and the OPCW are the appropriate instruments for eradicating chemical weapons from the face of the earth. The States of MERCOSUR and the associated States are prepared to support these instruments in order to ensure that the Convention and the OPCW can serve as pillars supporting a world characterized by peace, international security, development and the absence of all weapons of mass destruction. Consequently, MERCOSUR and Bolivia and Chile support draft resolution A/C.1/55/L/18, submitted by the delegations of Canada and Poland.

Mrs. Arce de Jeannet (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico has the honour of introducing draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.9, entitled "United Nations Disarmament Information Programme". It is sponsored by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, and South Africa.

We are also introducing draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.10, entitled "United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education", sponsored by Argentina, Chile, Egypt, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Mozambique, Pakistan, South Africa, Sweden and Thailand.

These two initiatives are part of the traditional support that Mexico provides to the activities of the United Nations in the area of disarmament.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of the activities of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme starting in 1998, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 53/78 E. Document A/55/128 and addendum 1 describes in detail the informative and educational materials of the Organization in the area of disarmament.

Training activities that have a favourable impact, mainly in the training of officials in developing countries, are also welcome, as are the means for cooperating with civil society, activities carried out in the regional sphere and activities carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Public Information.

Addendum 1 of document A/55/128 includes information on the contributions made to the Voluntary Trust Fund for the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme between January 1998 and December 1999. We should like to express our gratitude to the States that have generously contributed to the Trust Fund, and we hope that more States will join the list of contributors in the future.

The last preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.9 welcomes the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme. Its operative section emphasizes the need to disseminate information about arms limitation and disarmament by electronic means and through publications of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs.

Draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.9 recommends that the Programme continue the coordination, production and management of the Web site dedicated to disarmament, with a view to keeping an updated source of information that is readily accessible, and that the Web site be produced in as many United Nations official languages as possible.

It also recommends that the Programme continue to organize debates on subjects of interest in the area of arms limitation and disarmament in order to improve understanding and facilitate an exchange of views among the Member States and civil society.

Finally, it takes note of the proposal of the July 2000 proposal of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters for a study on disarmament and non-proliferation education.

Draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.10, on the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, is the outcome of a proposal adopted unanimously by the members of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. The presidency of that body is held by the Mexican expert. The Mexican Government agreed to introduce this proposal in the First

Committee without making any amendments to its content.

The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts assembled on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, to prepare a study on disarmament and non-proliferation with the objectives of defining contemporary forms of disarmament and non-proliferation education and training and assessing the current situation of such education and training at various instructional levels. It would also recommend ways to promote education and training in disarmament and non-proliferation, examine ways to use new pedagogical methods, recommend ways for the organizations of the United Nations system to coordinate their efforts in disarmament and non-proliferation education and devise ways to introduce this type of education and training in post-conflict situations. This report would be presented for the consideration of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

Mexico is aware of the budgetary restrictions facing the Organization. Consequently, the expenses for the work of the expert group, whose composition would be more restricted than the usual expert group, will be covered by existing budgetary resources.

The delegation of Mexico hopes that draft resolutions A/C.1/55/L.9 and A/C.1/55/L.10 will enjoy the support of the First Committee and will be adopted without a vote.

The Chairman (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, who quite ably led the work of the Disarmament Commission. Mr. Zarif will report on the work of the Commission's session and introduce the relevant draft resolution.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): I should first like to present to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Bureau my congratulations on your election as officers of this Committee.

The most compelling security question in the new era of international relations is to define and establish a global security scheme which preserves and ensures the national security of all States. Disarmament, in this context, plays a very prominent and ever-increasing role. In the new international environment of the post-cold-war era, the United Nations Disarmament Commission has played an important role in consolidating and ensuring the contribution of Member States of the United Nations in the field of disarmament.

The Disarmament Commission, as the universal disarmament body, in which all Member States participate, is an important mechanism within the United Nations system, expected to contribute to further defining the general structure of a new security posture at the regional as well as international levels.

In this respect, and taking into consideration the priorities of the international community as set forth in the recommendations and decisions adopted by major disarmament bodies, and particularly by General Assembly resolutions, the Commission has set forth a programme of work to respond to such a demand.

The elimination of nuclear weapons is definitely among our highest priorities on the disarmament and international security agendas. Numerous calls have been made through resolutions of the General Assembly and other relevant bodies to commence discussions and deliberations on advancing nuclear disarmament. In this spirit, the Commission extensively considered beginning deliberations on nuclear disarmament as a priority, and all members worked very hard to explore all possibilities to enable the Commission to begin these deliberations.

The Commission, in a spirit of cooperation, succeeded for the first time in its history in including the item "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" on its agenda. The Commission has previously been able to consider other issues under the umbrella of nuclear disarmament, but this time it agreed to consider nuclear disarmament more directly and in a broad context.

The Commission furthermore agreed to consider as the second item on its agenda the question of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. This is a subject of great importance in the disarmament and national security agenda.

I am happy to report that the deliberations of the Commission this year, at the first session on these two agenda items, were quite comprehensive, and the report of the Commission was adopted by consensus. With the Committee's permission, I should like to introduce the

general outline of the report of the 2000 session of the Disarmament Commission.

The report of the Commission for its 2000 session, contained in document A/55/42, as in previous years consists of four chapters and an annex, containing the results of the deliberations on two agenda items during the 2000 substantive session. The first three chapters include an introduction, an organizational section and the list of documents. Chapter IV, "Conclusions and recommendations", covers two consensus reports of the Working Group on item 4, entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", and item 5, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", as well as the status of deliberations on both the issues under discussion. The annex sets out the report of Working Group I.

The Disarmament Commission organized its 2000 session in accordance with the mandate set forth in paragraph 118 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, the guidelines established by the reform programme entitled "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", which was unanimously adopted by the Commission in 1990, and decision 52/492, adopted under the item on the rationalization of the work of the Disarmament Commission at the resumed session of the First Committee in 1998.

In accordance with the latter decision, and starting from the year 2000, the Disarmament Commission was in principle supposed to consider two substantive agenda items, one of them specifically dedicated to nuclear disarmament. However, the Commission can add a third item on an exceptional basis. In the course of last year's organizational session, the Commission agreed on a two-item approach, those two items being "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms".

The consideration of item 4 has clearly demonstrated that the decision to introduce the item "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" into the Commission's agenda was timely. In the course of two meetings devoted to the general discussion, delegations made comments on a variety of nuclear disarmament issues and related international security matters, expressed their concerns over emerging trends and presented concrete ideas and proposals.

Based on those deliberations, the Chairman of the Working Group was able to submit his working paper, which took into consideration written as well as oral submissions and comments by delegations on his first draft. The Chairman's paper is his sole responsibility and does not represent a negotiated position. However, it is duly noted that Chairman's paper is a good basis for further consensus-building. I wish to express my appreciation to the Chairman of Working Group I, as well as to the Member States, for achieving this goal.

With regard to item 5, on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, deliberations — as candid and intellectually challenging as they were — did not lead to agreement on annexing the Chairperson's paper to the Commission's report. States demonstrated flexibility and were ready to work towards an agreement on this issue; however, in the end, differences could not be fully reconciled.

I hope that our inability to agree on annexing the Chairperson's paper will in no way hinder the beginning of the substantive discussion of the item at the forthcoming session. Neither should it render void the positive elements of last year's deliberations on the item. It is heartening to note that the Chairperson of the Working Group intends to continue her informal consultations with Member States during the inter-sessional period. I sincerely thank her for her good work and wish her success.

Finally, I should once again like to express my gratitude to all delegations for their understanding and support. A special tribute should be paid to the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur of the Commission, as well as to the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, for their imaginative and creative approach to the tasks entrusted to them by the Commission.

I should also like to express my gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Jin Yongjian and Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala, the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their valuable assistance. My thanks and appreciation also go to the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya, as well as to his able colleagues serving as secretaries of other working groups. On

behalf of the Commission, I express my sincere appreciation to all the other members of the Secretariat who assisted the Commission in carrying out its tasks.

With these remarks, I present the annual report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/55/42. Allow me to take this opportunity, on behalf of the sponsors — which are traditionally members of the expanded Bureau of the Commission — to introduce as well the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/55/L.26, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission".

This draft is the result of open-ended informal consultations among members of the Disarmament Commission. It has been prepared in a manner similar to that of previous resolutions regarding the Commission, with only certain appropriate changes in the text as circumstances warrant. In this respect, paragraphs 3 and 4 of last year's resolution were deleted from the text of the proposed draft, since the issue of further rationalization of the Commission's work was not addressed this year.

Paragraph 5 of the draft refers to the two new agenda items, namely "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms".

On the question of the duration of the session of the Commission, as delegations remember, in resolution 54/56 A the Commission decided to hold the Commission's sessions for a period not exceeding three weeks, according to a 1998 decision on rationalization of the work of the Commission. However, the year 2000 turned out to be extremely busy with disarmament-related events. In an effort to accommodate many conflicting meetings and conferences, and taking into consideration that both agenda items were in their initial year of deliberations, it was agreed — on an exceptional basis and without setting a precedent for the future work of the Commission — to reduce the 2000 substantive session to two weeks. In the present draft, paragraph 6 reverts back to the normal practice of having three-week substantive sessions of the Commission.

Let me conclude by expressing my hope for the success of the Commission's deliberations during the forthcoming session in 2001. The previous session laid a solid foundation for a more focused and target-oriented consensus-building process. I hope that draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.26 will again enjoy consensus support, as have draft resolutions in previous years.

Mr. Noburu (Japan): I shall introduce the draft resolution entitled "A path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons", contained in document A/C.1/55/L.39.

Each year since 1994, the Government of Japan has submitted a draft resolution under the title "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons", and this draft resolution has always been adopted with wide support from Member States. This is partly to be attributed to the intensive pre-consultations Japan held every year with a wide range of Member States, including the nuclear-weapon States, in an attempt to reflect their diverse views in that resolution. It is worth mentioning that thanks to these consultations, the resolution was adopted in 1998 with the support of all the nuclear-weapon States. In the light of the successful conclusion of the 2000 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, Japan decided this year to submit a new draft resolution, drawing upon both our past resolutions and the Final Document of the Review Conference.

Japan has approached as many States as possible, here in New York as well as in their capitals, in order to explain and seek their support for that draft resolution. We strongly hope that our draft resolution will again this year be widely supported, so that it will provide a solid foundation for future progress in nuclear disarmament.

Knowing that the delegation of Algeria has also introduced a draft resolution which welcomes the outcome of the NPT Review Conference, we have included in our draft resolution some additional values which we consider vital for achieving progress in nuclear disarmament.

I should like to underline that we have no intention whatsoever of deviating from or contradicting the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference. We only wish to try to make the agreement in the Final Document more realistic.

While our consultations with various delegations have revealed that some of the points may not be agreeable to every Member State, we should like to retain them because the new language expresses the original position of Japan, which has a special background in this area. That is to say, a nuclear-

weapon-free world should be achieved as early as possible, but the shortest way to that goal is to take a step-by-step approach, implementing concrete and practical measures one after another.

Let me briefly explain some of the salient points in the text. First of all, the title of the draft resolution is now "A path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons", as opposed to the traditional title "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons". The operative paragraphs specify the steps to be taken along such a path, on the basis of an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate totally their nuclear arsenals and the practical steps agreed upon at the Review Conference.

Operative paragraph 3, which specifies a number of such steps, is taken from the Final Document of the NTP Review Conference. However, we have added a few new elements. First, subparagraph (a) sets the year 2003 as the target year for entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) because we believe it is time to think about such a target, taking into consideration the positive pledges made this year by some key States.

Secondly, subparagraph (b) of our draft resolution is more straightforward than the NPT document in calling for the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material. It also sets the year 2005 as the target year for the conclusion of such negotiations. In this subparagraph, we also retain the reference made in last year's resolution to a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. We believe this step should logically be given high priority in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In operative paragraph 4, we specify two new intermediate steps which the nuclear-weapon States must logically take in their efforts to realize the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. These are a continuation of the nuclear disarmament process beyond START III and deeper reductions in nuclear weapons by all the nuclear-weapon States, unilaterally or through their negotiations, in the process of working towards achieving their elimination.

Finally, operative paragraph 11 welcomes the consensus adoption at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference in September of a resolution that includes elements of a plan of action to promote and facilitate the conclusion and entry into force of safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

At the Millennium Summit, as well as during the subsequent general debate of the General Assembly, both Prime Minister Mori and Foreign Minister Kono of Japan announced Japan's intention to submit a United Nations draft resolution on nuclear disarmament. The draft resolution that I have just introduced is the product of intensive consultations with Member States. It is a quest to define, to the greatest extent possible at the end of the twentieth century, a path that we all must take to realize a world free of nuclear weapons. Japan hopes that this draft resolution will be supported by each and every delegation.

I should also like to invite any Member State which is willing to do so to join us as a co-sponsor.

Mr. Luck (Australia): The Australian delegation welcomes the submission of Japan's draft resolution entitled "A path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons".

Last year, Australia co-sponsored Japan's nuclear-disarmament resolution, and we are pleased to be able to do so again this year. We hope the draft resolution will be able to attract wide support, including from the nuclear-weapon States.

We particularly welcome those paragraphs in the draft resolution which give expression to the outcome of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. The draft resolution reflects key elements of the NPT Review Conference outcome, most notably as they relate to article VI of the Treaty.

It is vital that the international community remain solid in its commitment to the undertakings made at the Review Conference and that we begin implementing those commitments at an early stage. Delegations will note, for example, that in operative paragraph 3 (a) the draft resolution calls for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by 2003. This may be seen by some as an ambitious deadline, but, like Japan, Australia has consistently called for the entry into force as soon as possible of this vital reinforcing instrument for the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Similarly, we welcome the emphasis in the draft resolution on the importance of an immediate commencement of negotiations in the Conference on

Disarmament on a treaty banning production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, taking into consideration both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

We welcome the emphasis on the conclusion of a programme of work in the Conference on Disarmament, which includes the establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament, and we welcome the emphasis on the early entry into force and full implementation of START II and the conclusion of START III as soon as possible, while preserving and strengthening the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty as a cornerstone of strategic stability.

We further welcome the inclusion of the steps identified by the NPT Review Conference to be taken by the nuclear-weapon States leading to nuclear disarmament, including as they relate to further unilateral disarmament steps, transparency, non-strategic nuclear weapons, concrete measures to reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons, security policies and the engagement as soon as appropriate of all the nuclear-weapon States in the process leading to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons. Equally important, the draft resolution draws attention to the importance of ongoing efforts to dismantle nuclear weapons and the need to ensure that excess fissile material is handled in a safe and effective way.

We also endorse the draft resolution's emphasis on the importance of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Australia is a committed supporter of the IAEA strengthened safeguards system, developed to remedy the limitations exposed by Iraq's clandestine nuclear-weapons programme. Full effectiveness of the strengthened safeguards system will be achieved only when there is universal adherence to the additional protocols to IAEA safeguards agreements, which makes this a key non-proliferation goal.

As we noted in our statement in the general debate, Australia is pleased to have been the first country to ratify an additional protocol and urges all States that have yet to sign and ratify an additional protocol to do so as quickly as possible. I commend the draft resolution to delegations.

Mr. González Saiffe (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico is pleased to present, on behalf of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela, draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.8, under agenda item 79. The draft resolution is entitled "Consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco)".

The States parties and signatories of the Treaty of Tlatelolco welcome the recognition given in the Final Document of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference last May to the importance of the establishment of nuclear-free zones and the important role they play in promoting peace and world and regional security, strengthening the global non-proliferation regime and contributing to the attainment of the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

At the regional level, it is important to note the agreement reached in resolution 388 of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, adopted on 30 November 1999, to request the Secretary-General of that Agency to draft a proposal containing specific objectives for the convening of an international conference of the parties of the nuclear-free zones and to establish contacts with the authorities of other nuclear-free zones in order to communicate to them the interest in holding such a conference and to hear their views.

The priority accorded by Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean to the consolidation of the regime prohibiting nuclear weapons established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco has been demonstrated once again this year through the sponsoring of this draft resolution by all the States parties and signatories of the Treaty.

Draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.8, *in its eleventh* preambular paragraph, notes with satisfaction the ratification by Nicaragua on 8 November 1999 of the amendment to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which was adopted by the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean in resolution 290, as well as the acceptance by Panama on 8 August 2000 of the amendments to the Treaty of Tlatelolco adopted by the

General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean in resolutions 267 and 268, and Ecuador's ratification on 30 August 2000 of the amendments to the Treaty of Tlatelolco adopted by the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean in resolution 268. Consequently, the amended Treaty of Tlatelolco is now fully in force in 16 countries.

In its operative paragraphs, the draft resolution welcomes the concrete steps taken by some countries of the region during the past year for the consolidation of the regime of military denuclearization established in the Treaty and urges those countries of the region which have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification of the amendments to the Treaty approved by the Agency in resolutions 267, 268 and 290.

We hope that draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.8, as in previous years, will receive the broadest possible support of the First Committee and will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Antonov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Russian Federation, together with the delegations of the Republic of Belarus and the Peoples' Republic of China, is submitting a draft resolution entitled "Preservation of and compliance with the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems", as contained in document A/C.1/55/L.2, for consideration by the United Nations General Assembly.

The text of the draft resolution is identical to the resolution adopted at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. We are not proposing any revisions that would change the essence of last year's resolution. We feel that such an approach will allow us avoid a protracted and unnecessary debate.

The draft resolution is not confrontational in nature. It is based on the language of the Treaty itself and on the joint statements by the Presidents of Russia and the United States on this issue.

It is not targeted against any country and does not impinge upon anybody's interests. The objectives pursued by the sponsors of the draft resolution are to secure the continuity of the position, adopted by the international community in support of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, not to allow its revision or destruction, to prevent the deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems for defence purposes which are banned by the Treaty and, by so doing, to ensure the preservation of the Treaty as it currently stands and the full implementation of the obligations contained therein.

Though only a limited number of States are parties to the ABM Treaty, it affects the fundamentals of the security of practically every State. Compliance with the Treaty cannot be considered a matter for Treaty parties alone. For the more than a quarter of a century of its existence, the ABM Treaty has proved its effectiveness and viability. Throughout this entire period, it has ensured the balance of forces and world stability, while playing a decisive role in the containment of the arms race.

The great significance of the ABM Treaty for nuclear disarmament is recognized by practically all States. It was the ABM Treaty which created the basic strategic prerequisite for the conclusion of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces, START I and START II Treaties. Nuclear disarmament, which had previously been an abstract idea, became one of the practical priority objectives of the international community. Both nuclear disarmament and the future of the ABM Treaty, in their profound logical interrelationship, are subjects of concern to all countries of the globe, without any exception.

The international community expressed its attitude towards the ABM Treaty by adopting a resolution a year ago in support of the Treaty at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. That resolution has played an obvious positive role in creating the necessary atmosphere around the ABM Treaty, the future of which was being threatened.

I wish to recall that at the recent Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, this Treaty was recognized as a cornerstone for maintaining global strategic stability and the basis for strategic offensive arms reductions. The destruction of the ABM Treaty would result in extremely negative consequences for the process of arms limitation and reduction, for non-proliferation regimes covering weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, for the entire system of international treaties and agreements in the sphere of arms control and, in general, for strategic stability and international security. The alteration of the ABM Treaty would be

equivalent to its destruction, in that instead of prohibiting the deployment of national missile defence systems it would permit such deployment.

The Russian position on the ABM Treaty is known to everyone, and it remains unchanged. We are against its revision or its being undermined. We see no real basis for the revision of the obligations it contains. We consider it necessary to continue efforts aimed at promoting support for the ABM Treaty.

In spite of the decision taken by United States President Bill Clinton not to commit himself to the deployment of a national missile defence system, the situation regarding the ABM Treaty has not changed in principle. The work on preparation of the United States missile defence system is still under way. We are in favour of continuing the dialogue with the United States. However, this does not imply our consent in any way to the adaptation of the ABM Treaty to accommodate the United States national defence system. I wish to stress that Russia has not conducted, is not conducting and is not willing to conduct any negotiations with the United States on the amendment of the ABM Treaty with a view to its adaptation to accommodate the American missile defence system. Such an adaptation is not possible at all, since any change in the core provisions of the ABM Treaty — that is, the prohibition of the deployment of the national missile defence system and of the creation of the basis for such a system — would void the Treaty of its purpose. In the dialogue with the United States of America on START and ABM issues, we have repeatedly pointed out the fatal consequences that would result from the destruction of the ABM Treaty for disarmament and strategic stability.

Russia is ready to continue working jointly with the United States as well as with other interested States to ensure international security, including speedy movement towards agreement on the further reduction of nuclear arsenals, the enhancement of the nuclear and missile non-proliferation regimes and the strengthening of strategic stability by political means. We recently ratified START II, the 1997 New York package of START and ABM-related agreements and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We are awaiting reciprocal measures from the United States.

We favour the immediate commencement of START III negotiations. During the Okinawa Summit, the Russian President, Mr. Putin, gave United States President Clinton detailed proposals on the main items of START III negotiations. We feel that the conclusion of a START III treaty is possible only if the integrity of the ABM Treaty is preserved. We believe that the continuing threat of the destruction of the ABM Treaty calls for additional efforts in its defence on the part of the international community, in order to safeguard global stability and international security.

These are the goals of the draft resolution on the preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty, submitted by Russia jointly with Belarus and the People's Republic of China. The adoption of the draft resolution would be a new signal by the international community in favour of ensuring the viability of the Treaty. We are hopeful that our draft resolution will meet with broad support.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his introduction of the draft resolution "Preservation of and compliance with the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems". I should like to make a few comments on matters related to this issue.

First, at present, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty is at risk of being weakened or even repealed. It is an urgent task for the international community to preserve and comply with the ABM Treaty. The ABM Treaty, which was concluded in 1972, constitutes the cornerstone of the global strategic balance and international security. It is also the basis for the further reduction of strategic offensive weapons. However, one country, in seeking unilateral absolute security and military superiority, is pushing hard for its national missile defence programme and has repeatedly called for a revision of the ABM Treaty. It has even threatened to withdraw from the Treaty if no agreement is reached on its revision.

Weakening or overturning the ABM Treaty, coupled with the development and deployment of the national missile defence system, will inevitably lead to serious consequences, upsetting the global strategic balance and stability, compromising mutual trust among States, impeding multilateral and bilateral arms control and disarmament processes and jeopardizing international non-proliferation efforts. It will also lead to the weaponization of outer space and trigger a new round of the arms race.

Last year, this Committee, as well as the General Assembly, adopted by an overwhelming majority the resolution on the preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty, sponsored by the Russian Federation, Belarus and China. Its adoption is clear testimony to the political will of the international community to oppose the deployment of national missile defence systems and the revision of the ABM Treaty. This showed that the overwhelming majority of the countries in the world want to maintain the global strategic balance and stability. They do not want to see an erosion of the positive results achieved since the end of the cold war by the international community in the areas of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, nor do they wish to see national missile defence systems become a negative factor, jeopardizing trust and impeding cooperation.

Since the beginning of this year, there have been some important developments with regard to the missile defence issue. Various countries have become increasingly aware of the harmful effects of national defence system development. More and more countries have expressed their anxiety and concern in this regard. With the relaxation of tension in certain regions, the excuse that such a system is being developed to counter the missile threat of the so-called "States of concern" is even more untenable.

In the meantime, we have also noted that there are still different views on the ABM Treaty and national missile defence systems. A certain country has spread all kinds of seemingly plausible but actually false arguments in an attempt to create confusion on this issue. The Chinese delegation believes that it is necessary to use this opportunity to take a close look at these arguments so as to clarify the issue.

Some argue that the ABM Treaty and national missile defence systems are issues that mainly concern the big Powers such as the United States and Russia and have little to do with other countries. It is also believed that the implementation and revision of the ABM Treaty should be determined by the States parties to the Treaty and that this Committee should not become involved in this issue. It is the view of my delegation that security has always been mutual. In today's world, all countries find increasing common security interests and challenges.

As a cornerstone of the global strategic balance, the ABM's significance and implications far exceed the bilateral relations between the United States and Russia and, rather, concern the security interests of all countries. Should the national missile defence system be deployed, the results achieved over many years in bilateral and multilateral disarmament and arms control will go down the drain. Furthermore, once the global strategic balance is upset, the tendency towards unilateralism in international affairs can only increase rather than decrease. Global as well as regional security will face new uncertainties. When this occurs, all countries — big or small, strong or weak, States parties or States non-parties to the ABM Treaty — will feel the impact.

It is therefore in the common interest of the entire international community to safeguard the integrity and validity of the ABM Treaty and to urge the relevant country to abandon its national missile defence plan. Each and every country has an obligation and duty to do its part to further this goal. Likewise, as an important forum on international security and disarmament, this Committee ought to pay great attention to the consideration of this important issue, so as to halt the above-mentioned negative development and avoid its grave consequences.

It is asserted by some that, because the ABM Treaty was concluded more than 20 years ago and has undergone amendments in the past, its further revision in the light of the changing situation is justified. I would like to point out that the arms control treaties concluded in the past should indeed adapt themselves to the changing international situation. The question is, is the ABM Treaty still suitable for the current international situation? My answer is yes.

The ABM Treaty is still the cornerstone of global strategic stability; this is a shared understanding among almost all countries. Secondly, existing arms control and disarmament treaties can of course be amended. However, amendments should be aimed at promoting the Treaty's purposes and objectives and enhancing international peace and security, not the contrary. If amendments have the effect of compromising a Treaty's purposes and objectives and jeopardizing international peace and security, such amendments, naturally, should be opposed and rejected.

The present proposal for the revision of the ABM Treaty obviously falls into the latter category. The argument that past revisions of the ABM Treaty justify new ones is totally untenable. The key is the purpose

and effect of amendments. Amending the ABM Treaty to pave the way for national missile defence system deployment is in essence an attempt to repeal the Treaty on the pretext of proposing amendments.

Some hold the view that since the country in question decided not long ago that it could not be committed to deployment of the national missile defence system for the time being, it is not necessary for the international community to concern itself with this issue any longer. It goes without saying that the above decision is a wise one. It shows that the concerns and anxiety of the international community have prompted that country to reflect upon its missile defence plan. However, it must be realized that this does not mean that such a plan has been abandoned. In fact, the research and development in this field has been stepped up. Tests are continuing rather than coming to an end. We must be fully aware of this fact. In view of the above, the international community must, as always, follow these developments closely and continue to urge States parties to the ABM Treaty to comply strictly with the Treaty.

Some argue that what the country is developing is just a limited national missile defence system, so there is nothing to worry about. It must be pointed out that the ABM Treaty prohibits all such systems. Any such system, be it limited or large-scale, is therefore a violation of the Treaty. As a matter of fact, the national missile defence system being developed by the country concerned cannot be a limited one. If a limited system is put in place, it will inevitably be expanded, eventually evolving into a limitless one. Once Pandora's box is opened, there will be endless consequences.

In recent years, the missile issue has become more and more salient. The Chinese delegation believes that the missile issue is a complicated one. A unilateral approach or measures detrimental to global strategic stability cannot possibly solve this problem effectively. To solve this problem fundamentally, all countries should be committed to promoting the establishment of a just and rational new international political order — rejecting practices based on power politics and the abuse of armed force — and to further strengthening regional and international security. Furthermore, the missile issue in all its aspects should be dealt with in a comprehensive and objective manner by establishing a universal and non-discriminatory global regime through broad international dialogue and cooperation.

At this session of the General Assembly, the Russian Federation, Belarus and China are again sponsoring a draft resolution on the preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty. This draft resolution is entirely constructive in nature and not directed against any country. Our desire is not to seek confrontation but to maintain global strategic balance and stability and promote nuclear disarmament.

We hope that more countries will support the draft resolution this year. We also hope that the country concerned will heed the call of the international community and make the right decision, in the fundamental interest of all countries and peoples of the world, by abandoning its national missile defence system plan, which harms all while benefiting no one.

Mr. Ling (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Our understanding of the movement towards a non-nuclear world, which is our general goal, should be confirmed by real steps in this direction. We are firmly convinced that the key factor for security is the maintenance of strategic parity and balance throughout the world. We regard compliance with the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty as the logical basis for the maintenance of lasting international stability, the destruction of which could lead to quite a dangerous weakening of the entire structure of international agreements.

In this connection, we once again at this session of the General Assembly, together with the delegations of the Russian Federation and China, wish to be sponsors of the draft resolution on the preservation of and compliance with the ABM Treaty. We are convinced that the ABM Treaty, following its ratification and entry into force, will allow us to create the conditions to maintain strategic stability, end the senseless and dangerous nuclear arms race and provide for sharp reductions.

It is difficult to contest the fact that this Treaty, signed and ratified by two of the major nuclear Powers, could fundamentally determine the entire system in the process of global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this connection, its importance for the entire system of international security cannot be overestimated.

The Republic of Belarus, in 1997, together with the United States, Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine,

signed a number of very important additional agreements which helped strengthen this important international agreement. We are in favour of the strict and mandatory fulfilment of the ABM Treaty. We should now allow it to be undermined or its provisions to be subject to any revisions.

We have initiated a procedure for the ratification of these agreements. All these steps testify to the consistency of our policy in strengthening the complex hierarchical structure of international security.

The obligation not to deploy an anti-ballistic missile defence or create a basis for such a defence is stipulated in article I of the ABM Treaty. This needs to be considered not only in the context of its fulfilment by countries parties to the Treaty but also in its broader application, especially as regards the dangerous proliferation of missiles and missile technology.

Regarding the announcement made by the current United States Administration on deferring the date for the final adoption of a decision on the deployment of a national missile defence system, we feel sure that that step was influenced not only by the results of recent tests but by the full support of Member States of the United Nations for the adoption of the relevant draft resolution at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

At the same time, a merely temporary deferral does not safeguard us from the threat to the entire structure of international security. In this respect, we once again express the hope that the wisdom frequently demonstrated by the international community in adopting important decisions will once again triumph.

Mrs. Mendis (Sri Lanka): My delegation will focus today on illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in this thematic discussion.

Illicit arms trade is now recognized as posing one of the most serious threats to global peace and stability. Almost all delegations have voiced concern over the present state of affairs concerning this issue. We commend the action taken by some Member States and certain regional organizations to address this question. However, the lack of more effective and more comprehensive national and international measures against the easy availability of illicit arms provides an impetus to terrorist organizations to continue on a path of violence.

Since illicit arms traffickers frequently operate across borders, national laws often prove to be inadequate. The Department of Public Information documentary we saw last Monday and the recent act of terrorism perpetrated against a United States Navy ship bring forth the reality of the constant danger of illicit arms and explosives.

Clearly, the magnitude of this problem and the transnational criminal dimension it assumes call for international cooperation and resolute action at national, regional and international levels to effectively overcome this threat. In this context, sharing information on the sources of supply, clients, types of weapons involved, methods used to finance and traffic in small arms in violation of national laws and the consequences of such activities is essential.

The Secretary General's consultations pursuant to resolution 54/54 R have provided a substantial amount of very useful information on the magnitude of this problem, as well as on counter-measures. We thank the delegation of South Africa for taking this initiative. Material in document A/55/323 will constitute helpful *input to substantive preparations for the forthcoming* international Conference on this subject. The content of the report encompasses a broad range of convergent views on the issue, from governmental, intergovernmental and civil society sources. We hope that the Chair of the Preparatory Committee will use this material in further elaborating the elements of the draft action programme for the forthcoming Conference. Particularly relevant in this regard would be the synthesis contained in paragraphs 77 onwards.

We hope that the Department for Disarmament Affairs will continue and intensify its work on the illicit arms trade, with particular focus on intergovernmental discussions on this issue. The Organization of American States and the Inter-American Convention against illicit arms, and similar instruments in Africa, could be useful for developing appropriate models in other regions. The Department for Disarmament Affairs can study the feasibility of this. The current negotiations under the auspices of the Crime Prevention Commission in Vienna on the protocol against illicit firearms and explosives should be supported and supplemented.

We expect the international Conference to provide an effective global cooperative framework to prevent, counter and eliminate illicit arms smuggling.

We urge that the Conference and the preparatory process keep this objective in focus. A more complex and possibly contentious discussion on a control regime for self-defence requirements will be unnecessary and should be avoided.

Government procurement procedures, insofar as they relate to the aspects and transparency measures relevant to the illicit arms trade, will naturally figure in the discussions. This is only to ensure that legitimate State defence procurement is not confused with illicit trade or that illicit trade is misconstrued or labelled as arms activity for any legitimate purpose.

We are encouraged by the actions of Member States to adopt national measures against trafficking by terrorist groups and measures to destroy surplus, confiscated or collected arms and light weapons. We also welcome the reappraisal by certain States of laws governing the possession of firearms and the attempt to introduce legislation criminalizing the actions of traffickers. Capacity-building to enable States effectively to implement national and international measures is equally important. Similarly, at the regional level, bilateral exchanges of information, joint border and sea lane control measures, customs cooperation and common export control standards are also important.

The United Nations should play a significant role in developing an international cooperative regime against illicit arms and in supporting practical measures to operationalize that regime. Document A/55/323 identifies several areas for such action by the United Nations. We hope the Department for Disarmament Affairs will consider practical action on them as appropriate.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): If war originates in the minds of men, most arms races, especially in the conventional field, are the outcome of problems, disputes and political competition in various regions and subregions of the world.

Despite the promise of a peace dividend after the end of the cold war, we have new reason for concern about the escalation of arms races in various parts of the world involving conventional weapons. This is due to several reasons.

One the one hand, arms expenditures are rising once again and of the annual $1 trillion military expenditures, over 80 per cent is spent on conventional weapons. These expenditures are rising sharply in certain parts of the world, propelled by the political ambitions of some and the political compulsions of others.

The draft resolution in document A/C.1/55/L.35 addresses the issue of Conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels. I have the honour to introduce this draft resolution on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Belarus, Fiji, Germany, Mexico, Nepal, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and my own delegation.

The draft resolution recognizes the crucial role of conventional arms control in promoting regional and international peace and security and the fact that conventional arms control needs to be pursued primarily in the regional and subregional contexts.

It also recognizes the need for the preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest level of armaments and military forces and notes the initiatives taken in this context in Latin America, South Asia and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which is a cornerstone of European security.

The draft resolution also reaffirms the basic principle that militarily significant States and States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional security and that an important objective of conventional arms control in regions of tension should be to prevent the possibility of military attack launched by surprise and to avoid aggression.

In the operative part of the draft resolution we would decide once again to give urgent consideration to the issues involved in conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels and request the Conference on Disarmament, as a first step, to consider the formulation of principles that can serve as a framework for such regional agreements.

It is a matter of some disappointment to the sponsors that the Conference on Disarmament has not established such a mechanism, which was called for in previous resolutions of the General Assembly. We express the hope that the Conference on Disarmament will be able, as part of its work programme next year, to undertake the exercise recommended by this draft resolution and to submit a report to the next session of the General Assembly.

We trust that this draft resolution, which reflects wide consensus among the international community, will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Mohammad (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to express its heartfelt thanks to the delegations of the Russian Federation, China and Belarus for their introduction of a draft resolution entitled "Preservation of and compliance with the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems" again this year.

It is regrettable that the resolution adopted last year did not deter the United States of America from developing its national missile defence system, which undermines the aims and purposes of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. The ABM Treaty is a cornerstone of the maintenance of strategic security and stability in our world today.

The ABM Treaty, since its signature in 1972, has helped to control and limit the deployment of such systems in the former Soviet Union and the United States of America. That Treaty played a crucial role in nuclear-arms control and helped to push nuclear disarmament forward. However, this Treaty is facing a serious challenge because of attempts by the United States to weaken it, contrary to the desire of the other parties to the Treaty, including the Russian Federation, and contrary to the will of the majority of the States of the international community, which are attempting to strengthen disarmament measures rather weaken them.

The aim of the United States of America in weakening the ABM Treaty is crystal-clear for everyone to see: to strengthen its strategic supremacy at the expense of other parties' security by developing a defensive missile system that does not exclude outer space from its sphere of application.

Even more seriously, the United States relies heavily on nuclear deterrence and it has resorted to force in international relations. It is using force and unilateral measures against Iraq, in a manner that runs counter to the Charter of the United Nations, by imposing no-flight zones, for instance. This is but one example among many where we see the United States of America practising the policy of force, or gunboat diplomacy, and flouting the rule of law.

The United States of America continues its continuation its cooperation with the Zionist entity to develop common and joint programmes for missile defence systems. The rocket successfully tested by Israel a few days ago is one of the fruits of such armaments cooperation, which leaves the door open for a further stage of armaments cooperation in which both shirk their responsibilities in disarmament, thereby destabilizing the international and regional systems.

It also diverts more financial and human resources to an arms build-up instead of earmarking those resources for economic and social development, with a view to establishing a culture of peace. This comes at a time when the world is in dire need of joint efforts to meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations and when we are trying to settle conflicts peacefully, shunning the policies of the use of force, which policies have led to nothing but destruction throughout the world.

On the basis of the foregoing, we fully support draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.2 and call upon all other States to support it as well.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.